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*Extension Service*, WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

## VICTORY FARM VOLUNTEERS

February 12, 1947

For your information

TO ALL ASSISTANT STATE FARM LABOR SUPERVISORS, VFV:

Subject: News Letter

## BACKWARD LOOK--AND FORWARD

It is natural that our work with youth throughout the emergency farm labor program has given us special concern for worker welfare. Without such a concern we never would have been able to recruit youth and maintain them in farm work in such large numbers.

And so ours was a special satisfaction to find that so much of the thinking at the three regional conferences was along the line of improving working conditions for agricultural labor. Among other things, we think that bodes well for improved working conditions for young people.

Some of the remarks of Dr. G. W. Hill, Wisconsin's rural sociologist, at the Chicago conference made a particular impression on us. For instance:

Whether youth workers "will respond to appeals for temporary farm work during the summer months will depend, to a large extent, on the working conditions which will prevail....Only so far as you who are charged with carrying out the program can convince farmers to create more favorable work opportunities, will this group be a part of the labor force."

"Unpleasant working conditions have always created more dissatisfaction than low wages."

"The labor reserve that used to lie in wait for farmers is no longer there."

"The farmer has become too much of an industrialist to return to 'catch-as-catch-can' labor methods."

These are scattered quotations. But I think you'll see the implications they have for us.

## TWO ROUND-UPS

More or less off the record--or at least unscheduled--were two good meetings on the subject of youth at Chicago and Atlantic City. Unfortunately, we couldn't round up enough youth supervisors for a meeting at Salt Lake City.



I was especially glad that some new folks got in on the two meetings. They not only got a chance to hear the views of us who have been around the VFV's these four years, but made their own interesting contributions from "grass roots" experience.

At Chicago, we had Smith, Waters and Rowzee of Mississippi; Bublitz, Minnesota; Colby, Tennessee; Gaston, Michigan; Murphy, Missouri; Wipf, South Dakota; Miller, Ohio; Alexander, Kentucky; Nichols, Iowa; Bollman, Illinois; and Srb, Nebraska. In the Claridge Hotel's solarium at Atlantic City, we got together Mrs. Buttrick and Supervisor Doane of Vermont; Weaver, New York; Downing, Maine; Whippen, New Hampshire; Smith, Pennsylvania; Brannon, South Carolina; Durfee, Maryland; and Orr, Connecticut.

In Salt Lake City, I did get to have a good talk with Kansas' W. O. Stark, but was sorry that Russ Adams wasn't on hand from Oregon.

WE HEAR FROM THE SCHOOL MEN                      The presence of school administrators on the conference programs really brought our interest in educational values into focus. I'm sure you all enjoyed getting these viewpoints. The talks will be mimeographed and sent to you later but perhaps right here you'd be interested in key statements from the three men:

State School Superintendent E. A. Bateman of Utah at Salt Lake City--"Of all the educative work available to young people, farm work seems to me the most educational."

Assistant Superintendent R. S. Gilchrist of Minneapolis at Chicago--"You and I owe it to our fellow laymen to help them see that youth need work to do... We used these youth during the war years to defend us. We've got to keep helping youth to grow up well."

Assistant Superintendent H. C. Thomas of New York City at Atlantic City--"Today's high school student is not the selected student of former years. High schools, no longer just preparatory schools for college, must train for all-round citizenship. And one way to do this job is to provide practical work opportunities."

NORTH OF THE BORDER                      Our northern "good neighbors," the Canadians, have produced the most complete study we've seen of the educational value in farm work--and even more significant, have advanced a "Suggested Plan for a Peace-Time Farm Service Programme for Secondary Schools."

Alex Maclaren, director of the Ontario Farm Service Force, gave me a copy of the proposal and accompanying survey at the Atlantic City meeting. Youth members of the OFSF seem to be the Canadian counterpart of our Victory Farm Volunteers, although the study of campers made by Maclaren is also concerned with college as well as high school students in the group.

The survey and proposed plan include so much significant material that we would hope to devise some method of getting a fuller report of it to you. The opinions and experiences of school pupils, parents, farmers and doctors quoted would interest you a great deal. Farmer reaction was extremely favorable; parents felt that their youngsters gained valuable experience that they



might have learned in no other way; doctors reacted with amazing approval, 100 percent of them heartily endorsing the suggested peace-time plan for a youth farm work program and commending farm experience for the way it "gives mental health" and "adds more vigor to the body."

The plan put forth is "that the Farm Service Force Organization be maintained as a permanent part of our Ontario Educational System, that the Department of Education recognize the Plan as an educational extension of Secondary School education....that the Department of Education so plan the Secondary School course and curriculum that every pupil--physically and medically fit--would be required to serve six months to one year before matriculation in some form of National Service such as farm service, soil conservation, reforestation, community planning, recreation, etc."

As I said above, there is a great deal more to the report. The writer expresses well his concern for the social, educational, and vocational values of the plan. And I was especially impressed with his faith that such a plan teaches the "interdependence of urban and rural life," "helps build a stronger, richer, and more effective Rural Ontario," and "helps Canada fulfill her obligations to Great Britain" and to the "Starving nations of Europe."

#### FASHIONS--AND FOOD

Here's a fashion note that even you men may want to scan. It will particularly concern you if you have any girl detasseling crews in your State. We picked it up from some Nebraska newspaper clippings sent us by VFV Supervisor Srb of the Cornhusker State--and the advice comes straight from the girls who worked in the fields last summer.

What should the well-dressed girl detasseler wear? The girls suggest jeans rather than slacks, a long-sleeved shirt, a bandana, a straw hat which preferably can be tied on, a kerchief for the neck, dark glasses, comfortable flat-heel shoes, and dark anklets. They advise two shirts for the day to provide a change if one gets wet from early-morning dew or rain. And they suggest cream for the face and lip ice or lipstick to protect the lips.

These "gal" workers are also sold on a good breakfast before starting out the day, and they advise lunches which include "potato salad, potato chips, raw carrots, tomatoes, and a great deal of fruit."

#### THEY LEARN LABOR SAVING YOUNG

W. O. Stark, Kansas VFV supervisor, is going to be plenty busy in ensuing months. On his calendar are plans for visiting 97 Kansas counties where he will help get local farm machinery shows underway. There would be exhibits of labor-saving devices and equipment, machinery repair, and all new machinery available.

One of the chief contributors to the shows would be the vocational agriculture instructors and their classes. With the help of vo-ag people, cooperating with county agents, vo-ag boys will again this year be encouraged to study labor-saving methods and build labor-saving equipment.

#### PUTTING IT BRIEFLY

Oregon's farm labor association is proposing a more adequate State traffic code, which ought to bring about even better safeguards for youth day-hauls...Northampton County, Pennsylvania, potato growers couldn't get pupils released from school for the October potato harvest.



but finally made a successful adjustment with the help of 115 youth placements on Saturdays and some mechanical pickers.... "We do know this," declares P. L. Putnam of his tobacco youth day-hauls in Connecticut, "that the rate of turn-over of the youths who were supervised was much lower than that of the youth who were not under supervision."

Up in Vermont, Mrs. Buttrick has worked out an outline for getting information about prospective youth live-ins from schools records and from the youngster's family. She's interested in more than a youth's grades--his ability to adjust, his physical history, his tendency toward home-sickness.... And speaking of selection, New Jersey is proud of the Hudson County youngsters screened there for placement in Vermont. Eighty-nine percent of the youth placed made good on Vermont farms.... As of November 30, 1946 seasonal youth placements for the entire nation totalled 78 percent of 1945 on the same date.

#### AVODAH BECOMES PERMANENT

You'll remember hearing about Camp Avodah, the fine Illinois youth camp where Chicago boys proved they could take it and also made a real contribution to vegetable production in the Chicago area. Under the joint auspices of B'nai B'rith Youth Organization and the Board of Jewish Education, Avodah has always cooperated with the Extension Service. This year Avodah moved to nearby Michigan and there has been working closely with B. A. Love and Doris Shimkus. "Avodah," by the way, is Hebrew for work, or more accurately, service.

Now it's interesting to learn that Avodah expects to be a permanent farm work camp for high school boys. "When the camp was first established, say the Avodah folks, "no one knew how far this project would go. No one knew, but a few had hopes and dreams. These few hoped that the camp would develop as an educational medium in the training of American Jewish youth, that Avodah would evolve a program which would pioneer a way of healthy, wholesome living for the Jewish adolescent in America."

From the record, it looks as if Avodah is doing just that.

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Some thought-provokers on the subject of migrant youth:

--When Oregon surveyed 389 migrant families including 1422 persons in October, 30 percent of that number were under 14 years of age.

--New York's Migrant Child Care Program provided a real service this year. The State contributed 85 percent of the operation cost, farmers and parents 15 percent. Twenty centers were operated, staffed by college students and teachers, white and Negro. Each child had a quart of milk, cod liver oil, a hot noon meal, rest and supervised recreation each day. All workers in camps were released from care of children to work.

--"If my prediction of more family units entering the migrant stream holds true, then more attention than in the past needs to be given to the educational problem of migrant family children in the areas of employment.... This is an area of activity where the Extension Service could exert a great degree of influence."--Dr. Hill at the Chicago conference.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Are VFV's worth time and effort to train them? That's the significant question Mrs. Martha Buttrick put to Vermont

farmers who used VFV live-ins this summer in writing her 1946 annual report. Seventy-six percent of them answered yes; 69 percent said they'd still want a city youth if other help is available in '47; 64 percent said they approved of a raise in minimum pay. Mrs. Buttrick always does an excellent job with her annual reports and this year's is right up to par.

"I would have been out of business three years ago without the help of volunteer youth," said one Vermont farmer. This farmer paid each of his two city boy "hands" \$85 a month this summer.

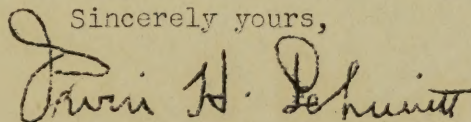
'HERE'S AN IDEA'

"Be an early bird," is the caption. And the cartoon shows one smart early bird making off with a fine, plump worm.

That's the mimeographed illustration Russel Adams uses to play up a suggested Platoon Leaders Newsette which he has just sent out to Oregon county farm labor assistants who use youth platoons. In a bright, chatty covering letter, Adams tells the farm labor assistants "Here's an idea. It's a news letter.... Send it monthly or oftener....The State office will help. Here's our first contribution. If you like the idea, use it and send us a copy."

That seems to wind things up for this news letter. As I've said many times before, we like to hear from all of you.

Sincerely yours,



Irvin H. Schmitt, Chief  
Victory Farm Volunteers Division  
Extension Farm Labor Program

(Copy to State supervisors,  
directors, editors)

